

THE RECONNECTOR

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOWELL RETIREE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ULRVP).

Welcome from the Chair

Welcome to the first issue of the University of Lowell Retiree Volunteer Program (ULRVP) Newsletter. We hope you will enjoy the information provided in this and future issues. Your reactions, news, ideas, and suggestions are greatly appreciated and will be incorporated into subsequent issues.

Who are we?

The founding steering committee of the ULRVP (Jack and Eva Apfelbaum, Virginia Biggy, Patricia Goler, Margaret Guindon, Mary Perkins, and Paul Gayzagian) has adopted the following Mission Statement:

In a cooperative venture of the University of Lowell retirees, their spouses and the University, the ULRVP is formed to provide opportunities for retirees to use their knowledge, skills and interests in volunteer service and to maintain a University identity with agencies serving the community. The following characterizes our motivation:

The men and women of the ULRVP recognize the value to the community and to themselves in volunteering their time and energy to people, groups and projects in need of help.

It is also very satisfying to remain in touch with one's colleagues, to share news of grandchildren, health, travel and volunteer participation..

President Hogan has enthusiastically assisted us with space, personnel and (out of meager resources) startup funds. We maintain a "sometime" office in Upham Hall on West Campus graciously staffed by Mary Perkins (see Retirement Can't keep Mary Perkins Down); and I assist when I can. In

addition, President Hogan is providing support personnel from the Office of Institutional Advancement: Catherine Quinn and Mark Levine (see A Year of Organizing). The National Volunteer Retiree Center, in which we are a dues paying member, has provided us with technical assistance and support.

The Steering Committee's first year

The steering committee meets monthly and develops goals and projects. We welcome new members. Our accomplishments:

- during Spring 1990, in cooperation with School Volunteers for Lowell, we participated in Greater Lowell, Community Reader Day

- with support from the Office of Community Service, we presented certificates to faculty and retirees at the May ULowell Service Recognition ceremony
- during the recent Hunger-Homeless Week, coordinated by the University Office of Community Service, Mary Perkins and I helped serve a Thanks giving dinner to 25 shelter family members at Pawtucket House; Jack and Eva Apfelbaum contributed according to their expertise (see Partners in Service)
- our organization hosted the first Round-Table meeting of Massachusetts volunteer retiree groups (see First Roundtable)

-Paul Gayzagian

Recruitment (Service Opportunity) Subcommittees

(Please call if you are interested in volunteering time for one for these worthy causes)

Association for the Blind Penelope Demogenes, 453-8655
Indian Hill Arts Paul Gayzagian, 256-7446
VISTA (see page 4). Mary Perkins, 256-7186

The Lowell Association for the Blind is a non-profit organization which has been serving the needs of the blind and the visually impaired for over 65 years. Volunteers provide a variety of valuable services, including tutoring, check writing, reading, driving, recreation, shopping, taping, escorting, letter writing, friendly visits. The Center for the Visually Impaired, established in 1987 by the Lowell Association for the Blind, is located at 200 Central Street, Lowell, MA 01852.

Indian Hill Arts (IHA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of the musical arts for all ages. It comprises

- The Indian Hill Symphony Orchestra
 - The School of Performing Arts (music lessons for all ages, Youth Theater and Summer Acts Camp, Multi-Cultural Dance Program)
 - Actbeat, a selection of music programs for schools, community organizations, and special functions.
- IHA is a member of the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts and the American Symphony Orchestra League and funded in part by the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, and individual and corporate gifts.

Partners in Service: Eva and Jack Apfelbaum

A recent evening spent doing art work with children from two of Lowell's shelters, was a bitter sweet experience. Appreciative young mothers, large eager eyes, the gift of an assistant - all were helpful. However, the far-too-small room in which the activity was to take place, the totally unexpected age mix, from three year olds to several in their teens, the television sounds from an adjoining room, the far-too-low chairs, dim lighted passageway to the kitchen in the dining room caused me to expand my already flexible plan. Yet, the assortment of attentive participants spurred me on. From the visions of things we saw behind closed eyes when we thought of a nice place to be, either indoors or out, we selected sun and moon to bath tub and toilet, cats and alligators and more. We covered much reality and fantasy. After briefly sharing these, we set up to create these visually.

The idea was to combine our creation into collage murals to hang in our respective shelter's dining rooms. But, bed time came sooner than expected. Assistants came and went and so did some of the children. For those children involved til the end, there was no completion. "You sincerely caught their attention. We never had it so quiet here. They must have liked it". All these nice comments by adults as I cleaned up did not express the obvious limitations faced by the little people.

-Eva Apfelbaum

Last week was Homeless Week. What a sort of innocuous idea for such a sad condition. The Learning in Retirement Association (LIRA) studying the interrelationship between technology and social conditions had approached me to talk about Housing during that week. I had little background for this except that of the typical homeowner.

My other background was connected with my work at the University where, besides engineering, I had taught courses in the field of technology, society and values. I accepted the challenge. Resources were not hard to find: the daily papers are a constant reminder of the many who are homeless. There are also many relevant books on the subject, some quite new. I started reading and preparing.

The more I read, the more I thought about some of the individuals who were homeless, their lives not so far removed from my own or that of some of my friends. Just a bad twist or turn, a job-layoff, coupled with sickness and it doesn't take long for a family, especially a young one, to find itself homeless. I tried hard to prepare well, to depict the problems of homelessness with intensity and also to point out some solutions toward which all of us can work: from volunteering to building houses with Habitat for Humanity, to lobbying our Congressmen and Congresswomen. The LIRA group was interested and active in the discussion.

I think I gave a good lecture, but the proof of it would be if one or two of the participants were to become more involved with the homeless than they had been before the lecture.

-Jack Apfelbaum

A pre-retirement peer support service

A committee has been formed to consider providing support and the "realities of retirement" (medical, financial, psychological) for ULowell employees approaching retirement. The service will coordinate with the University Social Committee and is planning a group session to be held shortly. Virginia Biggy (369-7587) will coordinate the effort. Mark Levine, a trained psychologist, is providing the spade work and advising. Please contact Virginia Biggy if you can help.

We look forward to being with you in the new year. Please take a moment to clip the coupon below with your personal retirement update. Please join us in our endeavors when you can. We hope you are enjoying a healthy, fruitful retirement. Our campus office number is 934-3218 (there is an answerphone when we are not there). — P.G.

Retiree Leadership Conference a Success

"Retiree Leadership: Untapped Power to Light Up America's Future" was the theme of the November Launch '90 conference, held in Pittsburgh, PA. The power and potential of retiree leadership was everywhere in evidence, from the eye-catching display of a hundred posters of retiree volunteers at work, to the wide variety of speakers engaged in promoting this important source of volunteer action.

More than 400 attended, representing over 100 employers and more than half of the 40 national employer-based Retiree Volunteer Programs, participated. Baystate Retiree Volunteer Council (BRVC) member representatives included Boston Edison's Retiree Volunteer Program Chair, Paul Shea, Harold MacWilliams from Liberty Mutual Insurance Corporation, Mike Lucarelli of the Massachusetts Volunteer Network, and Joan Friebely and Philippe Villers of the BRVC.

The conference marks the coming of age of a growing nationwide movement towards retiree-run volunteer programs. It success has encouraged us to consider hosting a 1991 regional conference in Boston for New England employers and BRVC members.

-Philippe Villers

Retirement Can't Keep

Mary Perkins Down



Mary Perkins just say can't goodbye to the University of Lowell. She retired from the University for the first time in 1980, after 19 years of service as a secretary, only to return on a part-time basis nine months later. She bade farewell to the institution again in 1986, vowing to enjoy a leisurely retirement with her husband, Tom. Now, she's back again — on a volunteer basis. Mary has been donating her secretarial skills to help out the University of Lowell Retired Volunteer Program and she plans to get involved in other activities through the program.

"I just can't keep still for a minute. There just aren't enough interesting things to do. You could say I'm a workaholic," she said.

Many people of Mary's years — she'll be 80 in March — wouldn't mind putting up their feet and relaxing after a lifetime of hard work. But considering Mary's past, it is not surprising that she finds inactivity unappealing.

After raising four children, Mary returned to the work force in 1961 at the age of 50. She still recalls how thrilled she was when she walked out of Lowell Technological Institute, the predecessor of ULowell, with the

knowledge that she was to be among the employed once again.

"The day I got that job and walked out of there I thought that was the best thing that ever happened to me, except getting married," she said.

Mary started with the Division of Continuing Education, and also worked in the admission's and provost's offices and for Dr. William Hogan, when he was the vice president of academic affairs, during her first stint at ULowell. When secretaries were offered the chance to attend Lowell Tech for an associate's degree in business in 1967, Mary jumped at the opportunity. Mary, who received an executive secretary's certificate in 1931 from Burdett College after graduating from Marlboro High School, always had wanted a college degree. Admitting she was "starved for knowledge," Mary went on for a bachelor's degree in management from ULowell, which she received in 1978 at the age of 67.

But Mary wasn't interested in using her new degree for professional advancement. The intrinsic value of a college education was enough of a reward for her.

"I was always a secretary and proud of it. I just liked to work. I didn't care about the money. I liked the job and found the work so fascinating," she said. "I never had a job I didn't like."

She retired briefly in 1980 and received a rocking chair, which she promised to use while watching television. But she never kept that vow, admitting that the rocking chair doesn't get much use. "But it looks nice," she noted.

Mary soon became bored with retirement and returned part time to the University the next year, working for Continuing Education and the Master's of Business Administration program. She retired a second time at the age of 75. "I decided it was time," she said.

But retirement hasn't changed Mary's active lifestyle. Prior to a fall

last year which resulted in a crushed vertebrae, Mary had continued to walk and swim for physical exercise. She helps out her daughter at her home-based day care business and enjoys spending time with her husband and four grandchildren. She also has been studying Spanish on her own at home for years.

"I am tired at night if I don't do anything during the day," she said. "The more you do the better you feel."

In 1989, she got involved with the University of Lowell Retired Volunteer Program, acting as secretary at the Steering Committee meetings, recording, typing and distributing minutes to members. She also participated in a dinner prepared for a homeless shelter during the city's recent Hunger-Homeless Week. She is interested in getting involved, through the program, in tutoring students in reading in the schools in Chelmsford, her place of residence for the past 40 years.

Mary has been involved in volunteer activities throughout her life, including a stint teaching English to Cuban immigrants during the 1960s. She encourages others to do the same.

"That's why we're on this planet, to be helpful," she said. "I think there's a lot of satisfaction in volunteering. A lot of people have a lot of things to offer."

A Year of Organizing

In September 1989, President Hogan asked if I would provide, through my new Office of Community Service, University support and startup organizing for a University Retiree Volunteer Program (RVP). The model had been suggested by University trustee Philippe Villers, who had become so impressed by the Minneapolis based prototypes that he had volunteered to establish a Baystate Volunteer Retiree Center from his home in Concord.

As with most models, reality soon takes over. Our retiree pool was slow to respond to the offer to volunteer, but the contact was welcome for many. A year of phoning and writing and for a core group of about thirty, meeting and dining together, has made us aware of the joys of being contacted and sharing news of family, health, travel and volunteering with colleagues. We have learned from many similar groups that *broad based* employee retirement organizations precede employee retiree volunteer organizations. Therefore, we are considering social and morale building functions as central. However, we are proceeding with a second Community Reader's Day (to be organized shortly) and the pre-retirement peer support service (see page 2). We attend bi-monthly meetings of RVP roundtables to share experiences with other groups.

Community Service at the University and the Retiree

Paul has mentioned the involvement of retirees in Hunger-Homeless Week. You might be interested to know about other events of the week

- three sequential teach-ins on the problem, its origins, strategies for solution and opportunities for service, the third of which was held in downtown Lowell and included exciting discussion of policy and legislation followup by city officials, shelter personnel and the University; one outcome is a Hunger-Homeless Commission for the City.
- Walkathon and Hands Across the Shelter events in which the University family participated at all levels.

In addition to Jack Apfelbaum's presentation, Barbara Dowd presented in the Fall to LIRA's Eastern/Central Europe study group, drawing upon her recent visit to the Soviet Union.

Editor
Mark Levine
Writers
Eva Apfelbaum
Jack Apfelbaum
Paul Gayzagian
Patricia McCafferty
Philippe Villers

VISTA volunteers

It is fairly certain that the University will be awarded six VISTA volunteers, beginning work March, 1991. These will be overseen by the Office of Community Service and include placements at the Rape Crisis Center, the Homeless Shelter-Food Pantry network, the University-Community Partnership (the subject is substance abuse and community development) and School Volunteers for Lowell.

One category of VISTA volunteer is the retiree and my office would be delighted to perform pre-screening of anyone interested. Please telephone me at 508-934-3219 or Mary Perkins (see page 1).

-Mark Levine

Notes

- While this first edition was being prepared, Clare Garrity, a hard working ULRVP steering committee member and the sister of Institutional Advancement Director Catherine Quinn passed away. She is sorely missed.
- Tom Perkins and Jim Mann are recovering from recent illnesses.

Name: _____

Address: _____

News/Comment: _____

Please return to Paul Gayzagian, ULRVP, Office of Community Service, University of Lowell, Lowell MA 01854